

## 23<sup>RD</sup> MEETING OF ACP-EU REPRESENTATIVES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCLES

The 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of ACP-EU representatives of economic and social circles took place in Brussels on 5 October last. «(...) *The Agreement of Cotonou was signed two years ago, a moment that was to mark a turning point, a moment from which the partnership between the European Union and the ACP countries was to become a model of cooperation with a view to the development of these countries (...)*», reminded the WCL, present at the debates. «*From a commercial point of view, the ACP countries remain largely excluded from the effects of a rise in trade, (...) the liberalisation of the markets in the South reduces the tax receipts of the countries and makes them more vulnerable (...)*». The WCL cannot omit to mention the necessary coherence between human rights, workers' rights, the Agreement of Cotonou and the WTO-negotiated agreements. The Agreement of Cotonou can make the difference, but it necessary to materialise «the spirit that should inspire it». The Economic Partnership Agreements – EPAs – must serve «as a means to the end of social development».

## 285<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNING BODY OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE IN GENEVA

The 285<sup>th</sup> Governing Body of the International Labour Office (ILO) met in Geneva on 22 November last. Our President, Basile Mahan Gahé, took part in it as a regular member, Rabiou Diallo, Chairwoman of the World Women's Committee, as a deputy member. Hervé Sea, who will work as WCL collaborator at the Geneva-based liaison office as from 1 January, Béatrice Fauchère and Eduardo Estévez also attended the proceedings. The ILO launched the «World Social Trust», a pilot project in the struggle against misery worldwide. The Governing Body pointed out the necessity of a fund for «work and social protection» in Palestine. It also announced a mission to Myanmar and a cooperation programme in favour of Colombia. The WCL President called attention for assistance in the conflict in Ivory Coast. Finally, the election of the Director General, in March 2003, was also the centre of the debates.

## «SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION» EXAMINED

At the invitation of the WCL and the International Institute for Workers' Education (IIFE), trade union delegates from fifteen countries met in Belgium on 4-23 November for a seminar on

«Sustainable development and social protection». The «social protection» concept was clarified, upon which the participants exchanges views. Then ILO experts stated their views. The WCL's lines of force in the matter of social protection and sustainable development were also presented. Furthermore, the focus was on the role workers' organisations can play towards international financial institutions like the World Bank in the development of a universal social protection and sustainable development system.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND WTO...?

The Belgian federal Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, organised on 26 November at Louvain University the second international conference on globalisation. The main themes were the World Trade Organisation and the preparations for its next Ministerial Conference, scheduled to take place in Cancun in 2003. Eminent speakers went into two crucial questions:

- Can trade be the driving force behind sustainable development?
- How to improve trade and development one year after Doha?

The guests and speakers included around one hundred representatives of governments and the civil society (social partners, NGOs...). One of our vice presidents, Luc Cortebeek, did not fail to recall to mind that the workers' organisations deemed it indispensable to include core social standards in trade and development agreements. Faustina Van Aperen, Director of the International Solidarity Foundation and WCL representative, stressed the quality of the debates between WTO «pros» and «cons». In any case, we must continue to challenge the WTO and go on, more than ever, with our demands for a «trade at the service of humanity and not the other way round».

## WCL AND ACV-CSC IN DEBATE WITH GOVERNOR OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL (BRAZIL)

On 2 December, Eduardo Estévez (Deputy Secretary General) and Faustina Van Aperen (Director of the International Solidarity Foundation) received at the head office of the WCL in Brussels the Governor of the Federal State of Rio Grande Do Sul (Brazil) to discuss the social policy in Brazil, the cooperation agreements, etc. Pino Carlino, National Secretary of the CSC, led the ACV-CSC delegation, composed of Véronique Rousseau (International Department) and Annick De Ruyver (International Institute for Workers' Education). They sought ways to tighten the bonds

### TELE-FLASH

is a two-weekly information bulletin containing brief trade union messages, edited by the information department of the WCL.

Responsible editor :  
Willy Thys

Information officer :  
Mathieu Debroux.

Reproduction authorised under acknowledgement of source

### WCL

Trierstraat 33  
B-1040 Brussels  
Tel : 02/285.47.00  
Fax : 02/230.87.22  
E-mail:  
info@cmt-wcl.org  
Internet:  
www.cmt-wcl.org

of cooperation between the WCL, the ACV-CSC, the *Central Autonoma de Trabalhadores* (CAT) and the government of the Federal State of Rio Grande Do Sul. They also discussed the possible role of the new government, led by President Lula da Silva, in the application of a social policy in Brazil. Eduardo Estévez pointed out the support the *«Partido de Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB) lends to the World Social Forum. The WCL views this Forum as an excellent occasion for all social organisations to combine forces»*.

### **SAFETY AND SECURITY – CONGRESS OF FIOST**

From 29 November to 3 December, over one hundred delegates took part in a seminar and the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions of Transport Workers (FIOST). The debates were centred on safety and security in transport. The Congress concluded with the adoption of many resolutions, particularly on the tragic situation in Colombia and Argentina. The Congress also confirmed the position of the WCL as a necessary regional and international countervailing power to deal with the globalisation. *«Globalisation is no longer just an ideology, but a reality with concrete effects on the workers»*, said Michel Bovy, President of FIOST, *«the trade union movement, thanks to international cooperation, is the only organisation that has solid structures to deal with this phenomenon!»*

### **ORGANISING COMMITTEE OF UBUNTU HAD ITS FIRST MEETING IN BARCELONA**

Ubuntu is an African word that means «Humanity». It is also the name of an international alliance that stands up for a thorough and democratic reform of the international institutions. Former UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor launched the Ubuntu movement in March 2002, and the WCL has supported it right from the start. Eduardo Estévez, Deputy Secretary General, represented the WCL at its first meeting, in Barcelona on 7-9 December 2002, at which the movement launched a campaign. *«This campaign is aimed to let know that the reform of the international institutions is necessary for moving towards a democratic world governance. Everything must be more transparent, and the social organisations must be actively involved in the decision-making process»*.

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

### **CFTC PRESENTS NEW AND AMBITIOUS TEAM AT 48<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**

The 48<sup>th</sup> Congress of the *Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens* (CFTC) was held in Toulouse on 14-15 November. Secretary General Willy Thys addressed the Congress on behalf of the WCL. The Congress elected the new CFTC team. Jacques Voisin, from the metal processing sector, succeeds to Alain Deleu, who has retired. Jacky Ditinger remains Secretary General of the Confederation. Armel Gourmelon, in charge of the international relations and

familiar with several WCL organisations, has also retired. Jacques Voisin will take over Armel's offices in the ETUC and the WCL. Christian Levrel will assist him in the matter of international cooperation agreements. The policy resolution of the CFTC rejects the way the social commitments are «sold off», and insists on the preservation of the workers' rights. With the parole «A new worker's status», the CFTC wants to contribute to the «dignity» and the general welfare of the wage and salary earners. This demand exceeds the payment of decent wages and salaries, of course. The WCL wishes the new team a lot of success and thanks Alain and Armel for the work done.

### **USO SEMINAR: EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA COMBINE FORCES AGAINST GLOBALISATION**

On 20-22 November, WCL Deputy Secretary General Eduardo Estévez was in Spain for a seminar of the *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO) on the joint challenges and interests of Europe and Latin America. The 52 participants discussed among other things the possibility of international cooperation in the struggle against neo-liberal globalisation. *«The cooperation between European and Latin American associations must be strengthened, and the coordination between trade unions must be improved. In this respect, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) can play an important role»*, figured among the conclusions.

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

### **SSSS FROM SERBIA AFFILIATES TO WCL**

At its meeting in Ostend, on 13-14 October, the WCL Executive Committee approved of the affiliation of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia (SSSS). As from now, this Serbian trade union – with one million members the largest and most powerful one on the Balkan Peninsula – is officially part of our world confederation. Thus, the WCL encourages and follows closely the fundamental change of course the new leaders of the SSSS started a few years ago. The trade union is ready to protect in a democratic way the interests of the weakest in the Serbian society. As from now, this trade union will participate in all the WCL's international activities. The WCL, for its part, will undertake with the SSSS joint actions in support of the Serbian workers.

### **LDF CONGRESS: NO «CASINO» CAPITALISM BUT A SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY FOR LITHUANIA**

The Congress of the Lithuanian Federation of Labour (LDF), which has been affiliated to the WCL for several years, took place in Aynksciaia (Lithuania) on 23 November. The delegates not only reelected by common consent their President, Kazimiras Kuzminskas, and Secretary General, Regina Rekesiene, but also discussed the role of Lithuania as future European Union member state and the important task of the trade unions in the country. In his address to the Congress, WCL Deputy Secretary General Jaap Wiene said that the Union reports

spoke very highly of the public administration and legal system reforms and of the struggle against corruption in Lithuania. The reports indeed confirm the favourable development of the free market economy. «*Nevertheless, we must follow these developments with a critical eye*», stated Jaap Wiene. «*In too many cases the free market economy resembles a 'casino' capitalism in which pursuit of gain is the only thing that counts and workers are 'production machines' rather than human beings.*» Direct action in the field is indispensable to counter this. «*The members of the LDF and of other trade unions want concrete services at the workplace. That is why it is important to combine forces to strengthen the trade federations*», Jaap Wiene concluded.

#### **DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATIONS COMBINE FORCES IN BELARUS**

As President Lukashenko increasingly appropriates the programme and stands of the Federation of Trade Unions – the official national trade union federation in Belarus –, several democratic organisations have combined forces during the Congress of Free Democratic Trade Unions (CFDTU). Moreover, the President of Belarus has intervened directly in the trade union elections. On 24-25 November, WCL Deputy Secretary General Jaap Wiene was in Belarus to express our solidarity with the free and independent trade unions of Belarus. He pointed out that the trade unions had two important tasks to accomplish, jointly with the WCL: «*First of all, the free and democratic trade union movement of Belarus must be given full support. Then, the citizens must obtain transparent and objective information on their rights and on the political and social situation of their country*». The WCL continues to follow closely, and to lend full support to, the struggle for free democratic speech in Belarus.

#### **NEW PRESIDENT OF SOLIDARNOSC MEETS WCL**

Janusz Sniadek, the new President of Solidarnosc, was on 26 November at the WCL head office in Brussels, together with Jozef Niemiec and Andrei Adamcyk. After having been congratulated on this new presidency, the delegation discussed with Willy Thys (WCL Secretary General), Jaap Wiene (WCL Deputy Secretary General), Josly Piette (ACV-CSC Secretary General) and Paul Buekenhout (ACV-CSC International Relations Department) the place of Poland in the European Union. They also examined how Solidarnosc could even strengthen its position in the country's socio-economic structures and gain and keep more members. The WCL presented proposals to reinforce the cooperation between the trade federations of Solidarnosc. Solidarnosc, for its part, requested expressly support for the training of shop stewards.

## **CENTRAL AMERICA**

### **VICTORY OF THE SALVADORAN PEOPLE**

For weeks on end the trade unions have denounced the pressures on the part of the government to privatise social security in El Salvador. Countless strikes were called throughout the country. They proved to be successful as on 14 November Decree 1020 was ratified, thanks to a mass trade union mobilisation. The Decree guarantees the ban on privatisation and on the purchase of services or any other way to transfer health services to private institutions. The role of the autonomous national confederation CATS was decisive in countering this scheme to privatise social security. All during the dispute, it could count on the solidarity of the Central American workers' council CCT, the regional organisation CLAT, the institutions STISSS and SIMETRIS, many WCL affiliates from all world regions and the WCL itself.

## **SOUTH AMERICA**

### **COLUMBIAN TRADE UNIONS ORGANIZE PROTEST DAY AGAINST COUNTRY'S DISASTROUS SOCIAL POLICY**

From November 07 to November 11 this year, Willy Thys, WCL General Secretary, paid a solidarity visit to the WCL member organisation 'Confederación General de Trabajadores Democráticos (CGTD)' in Colombia. As a result of this visit, the WCL and CLAT – the WCL's regional organisation in Latin America – expressed, in a letter to Juan Somavia, General Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), concern about the trade union situation in Colombia. On the one hand, the death threats and attacks on trade union representatives are not only not receding, but they remain unpunished! On the other, the Colombian workers are being constantly threatened by the anti trade union and antidemocratic attitude of employers and the Government. In order to make it crystal clear for the Government that things cannot continue this way, the 'Comando Nacional Unitario' – a federation of four Colombian organisations, among them the CGTD – has declared a «day of national protest» on November 27. The 'grand finale' of this action was a massive protest march on Santa Fe de Bogotá.

### **CGTD STRENGTHENS POSITION IN COLOMBIAN SUGAR INDUSTRY**

During the General Assembly held on November 17, the workers of *Ingenio Manuelita*, the oldest sugar fabric of Colombia, decided unanimously to join the *Confederación General de Trabajadores Democráticos* (CGTD). In doing so, the federation, a WCL affiliate, strengthens drastically its position in the sugar sector. The CGTD not only defends Colombian workers' rights

but also wants to form a bloc with enterprises and workers against the negative impact of globalisation. That's why the CGTD, with support of the WCL, turned down sugar import for the Coca Cola production in Colombia.

## ASIA

### **CONFERENCE AND CONGRESS OF ASIAFEDOP IN FAVOUR OF A CLEAR POLICY AND ACTION PLAN**

The 20<sup>th</sup> INFEDOP Congress (*International Federation of Civil Servants*) held in March, emphasized how important a role the regional trade federations play in the defence of civil servants. As Asiafedop has taken this mission to heart, it organised from 24 to 30 October 2002, a Conference in Bangkok (Thailand) aimed at evaluating its policy and planning. This meeting was immediately followed by the second Asiafedop Congress on: «Developing Asia: The role of the Public Service Union». The debates focused on the impact of globalisation in this sector and an action plan for 2002-2005 was presented. Michel Beunen, Infedop project assistant, declared that it was «*particularly in*

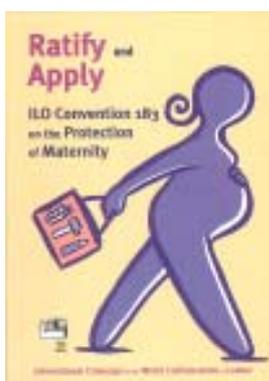
*regions where globalisation is at its height that citizens should be able to count on well-functioning institutions*». But the least one can say is that this isn't always the case. The sector remains dominated by political decisions of WTO, IMF and the World Bank. Under the direction of the BATU, WCL's regional organisation in Asia, Asiafedop presented the objectives for 2002-2005. In conclusion of the congress, Sultan Allam Mallik was elected as the new Secretary General of Asiafedop.

## AFRICA

### **MAURITANIAN DOCKERS RESUME WORK**

After an indefinite strike that for ten days paralysed all activity in the port of Nouakchott, the Mauritanian dockers resumed work on last November 5. The *Confédération Libre des Travailleurs de Mauritanie* (CLTM), WCL member, took this decision after the Government's announcement that it would cut income taxes. The CLTM considers this decision to be a step in the right direction but it will keep on fighting for trade union freedom and for the establishment of a dialogue on equal terms between the social partners and the political decision-makers.

### **CONVENTION 183: BECAUSE WORKING MOTHERS DESERVE SUPPORT!**



· The WCL considers the ILO Convention 183 (June 2000) to be a «basic social document» for the protection of women at work and of their children.  
· More than two years later, only four countries have ratified this convention (Slovakia, Rumania, Italy and Bulgaria)!

· The WCL department «Women and Work» continues calling upon all national trade unions to take up their responsibilities and ratify Convention 183 as soon as possible.

### **Schedule of activities**

- 16-17 December: Congress of the 'Confédération Libre des Travailleurs du Tchad' (CLTT), N'djamena – Chad;
- 09-12 January: ETUC Conference : «Capacity building of training projects in European trade unions », Slovenia;
- 19-28 January: World Social Forum, Porto Alegre – Brazil.
- Preceding the WSF, the WCL organises a seminar on «Economy in the service of sustainable development ».